



NEWSLETTER: DECEMBER 2023

Kati Thanda—Lake Eyre Heather Ducat— 13/9/2023

Heather and partner Robert took the opportunity to see Lake Eyre with water in it, in late June 2023. They drove to Marree, and were able to book a flight the next day.

Marree was established in 1883 as a rail head for the coming railway line to Alice Springs, but had been an Afghan cameleer base already, and the ruins of the first mosque in Australia, a mud brick building, are still there.

The 2 hour flight took in Lakes Eyre North and South. The two lakes have only filled 3 times in the last 100 years, the most water being the 1974

event, when the depth was 6m. Lake Eyre North occasionally gets some water, but Lake Eyre South is generally salt. On this occasion water from Warburton Creek was flowing into Lake Eyre North, and had reached about half way down the lake, to a depth of 30cm. The freshwater from the Creek sits on top of the salt water below in the Lake. There were no birds on the Lake- it was too early for that.

One of the sights is a plane wreck from 1989- the pilot was attempting to fly below sea level, but quite didn't manage it, and pilot and passengers had to walk 14k out.

Another is Marree Man- the biggest geolyth in the world at 2k long, constructed by a bulldozer in the Woomera Range days, by anonymous earthmover/s. It was not discovered until 1998.

They visited the mound springs at Coward Springs, one of a series of mound springs from Marree to the NT border, fed by the Great Artesian Basin. The road, telegraph and railway line followed the line of mound springs.

There had been a railway siding at Coward Springs, with a hospital, store and date plantation, with only the date plantation surviving.

They didn't have a lot of time to explore, as they were between weather events, and did not want to get flooded in. There was heavy rain at Uluru soon after their visit. They did get to see the ochre pit at Lyndhurst though, which was used by First Australians for 1000 years.



Photos: Heather Ducat
Lake Eyre North filling
Warburton Creek

September meeting– Rog Standen

Rog Standen gave two short illustrated talks. The first was about a processionary caterpillar train coming under attack by antlion larvae and the second was about a talk on Alfred Wallace and the famous Wallace Line.

Antlion ambush

There were only six caterpillars of the Bag Moth (*Ochrogaster lunifer*) in the caterpillar train but after attacks by five antlion larvae, only three escaped to find shelter in vegetative debris at the base of some bushes, 35m from where they were first attacked. Rog showed the attacks on video that he fortuitously took when he first noticed the train. The full talk and videos can be seen here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWMMj16dJIY>.

These antlions were not the usual ones that sit at the bottom of pit traps (which incidentally only make up 25% of antlion species) but are marauders that wait to feel vibrations and then push their way under the soil to attack the prey with huge pincers (Figure 1), injecting a poison to immobilise the prey and then suck the contents back through the same mechanism.

Rog said it was amazing to watch as the antlions took out the last caterpillar, then the fourth one and finally the leader. Caterpillar #5 was distracted for over ten minutes nuzzling the motionless #4 trying to pick up the thread of the train to follow, before heading off on its own seeking the shelter they were all after.



Photo: R Standen The huge antlion pincers embedded in a caterpillar.

Wallacea

The Royal Society and Geographical Societies of SA recently gave a seminar called Lines in the Sand, commemorating 200 years since Alfred Russell Wallace was born. One of the speakers was Dr Yi-Kai Tea, Chadwick Biodiversity Fellow at the Australian Museum. This talk stimulated Rog to share some of the fascinating butterflies that Kai spoke about. Rog utilised images from iNaturalist and many of Kai's descriptions.

The first butterfly was a Glorious Begum (*Agatasa calydonia*), which don't feed on nectar, but feed on carrion, dung and rotting fruits. They are shy and difficult to observe but can easily be baited out of the forest with anything that is putrid smelling.

Wallace named many species of a range of fauna, but he also had many species named after him. Of the many sub-species of the Blue Argus (*Junonia orithya*) butterfly, one is named after Wallace and one named by him.

In 1854, Wallace wrote "by far the most singular and most perfect disguise I have ever met with in a Lepidopterous insect is that of the Leaf Butterfly, Kallima". An example is the Bornean Oakleaf (*Kallima buxtoni*), (Figure 2) one of the best examples of protective imagery in the animal world as a result of natural selection. So perfect is the disguise that it comes with a mid-rib vein and patches of scales that resemble mould, fungi and other elements of decay.

But the perfect disguise of Kallima is betrayed by the stunning blue and orange iridescent dorsal surface of its wings (Figure 3). In the wild you see the flash of blue as it flies off but then disappears again when it lands and sits motionless.

Kai spoke of the large birdwing *Trogonoptera brookiana*, which Wallace described as a "rare and handsome insects,...being one of the most elegant species known". Birdwings get their name from the resemblance of their flight to swifts and swallows with a few wing beats followed by long periods of gliding. Where sulphur rich mineral springs can be found, it is not uncommon to see hundreds of these magnificent birds gathering to drink from these seepages and puddles. They need to do this as minerals and salts are scarce in flower's nectar. They use these minerals to produce pheromones and spermatophores (protein capsules containing spermatozoa) that are passed to females during copulation which enhances viability of eggs and reproductive success. This activity is called 'puddling' (Figure 4).

The most fascinating part of Kai's talk covered the amazing mimicry by the various forms of the female Great Mormon (*Papilio memnon*). Wallace wrote in 1864 "I am disposed to believe that we have here a case of mimicry....which has led to the singular exuberance of polymorphic forms in this and allied groups of the genus Papilio. I shall have to devote a section of my essay to the consideration of this subject." Females come in tailed and tailless forms and any female can have either or both of these as offspring.

Each of the polymorphic female forms are also a copycat of a poisonous species living in the same area! For example, *P. memnon anceus* mimics *Atrophaneura sycorax*, the White-headed batwing, *P. memnon butlerianus* mimics *Atrophaneura varuna* and *P. memnon distanttanus* mimics *Lasaria doubledayi*. The poisonous species come with brightly coloured heads and bodies to warn of their poison but the papilio females don't have coloured heads. What they do have is the corresponding colours on their epaulets and when they are flying, these patches at the base of their forewing give the illusion of having a white or red head. It is quite remarkable.

Sulawesi is a special place to Kai as it is a Wallacean transitional region with south-east Asia to the west of the Wallace line and New Guinea to the east. Arising from the collision of the Sunda (Asian) and Sahul (Australasian) shelves, Sulawesi didn't have much of its own fauna and was colonised from both sides of the Wallace line and these have now become their own species, slightly different to the original ones from either side. For example, the birdwing genus *Troides* are large and strong fliers that are found across south-east Asia and would be capable of crossing the Wallace line, but, while there are three species on Sulawesi, the genus *Ornithoptera* replaces this genus to the east (like the Cairns Birdwing and other PNG and Aussie birdwings).



Fig.2 Perfectly disguised Bornean Oakleaf (*Kallima buxtoni*) (image Dr Yi-Kai Tea)

Fig. 3 Malayan Oakleaf (*Kallima limborgii*) showing the flashy upperwing that betrays the butterfly's presence (image dhfisher)

Fig. 4 Birdwings (*Trogonoptera brookiana*) 'puddling' (image gancw1)

Wood Duck behaviour

Rog concluded with a brief anecdote about the difference in behaviour between Wood Ducks in the wild when they are quite protective of their young (Figure 5), compared to those in urban areas where they brazenly walk them around the streets on the way to the nearest waterway.

All text and photos supplied by Rog

Fig. 5 Female Wood Duck protecting its young in the wild



Sandbelt Tour 16/9/2023

Heather instigated and planned out our tour of some of the Sandbelt natural reserves. Heather and I both grew up in the Sandbelt so it was nostalgia as well as a feast of heathland plants for us. We started at Bay Road Heathland Sanctuary, Sandringham, which is locked away from dog walkers and cyclists, and we were taken around by the convenor, Sue Forster. Sue is also one of the editors of the Victorian Naturalist, though she has resigned from the position now. BRHS was bought by the City of Sandringham in 1939, and it was proposed to build a leisure centre on it. After a public campaign the leisure centre was built elsewhere, and the heathland preserved, and maintained by Bayside CC and a team of volunteers. Ecological burns are carried out regularly, regenerating the vegetation. In flower were several species of wattle, most notably Hedge wattle; *Banksia marginata*, *Wedding bush* was starting, *Common Aotus*, *Trigger plants*, 2 species of *Hibbertia*- *sericea* and *fasciculata*, chocolate lilies, and *Olearia ramulosa*, plus nodding greenhoods. Wattlebirds and noisy miners were the only birds. The most recent burn site was a sea of *Stipa* grass heads waving in the wind. The site is 2.1h, with a viewing platform so that when it is locked the public can still enjoy the vegetation. The Friends maintain inaturalist observations, with many species of insects, 5 mammals, 5 reptiles, and 24 birds recorded so far.

Next stop was just around the corner, George St Reserve. This area was all low growing heathland, with lots of wedding bush as well as many of the plants already seen. There had been a controlled burn there in 2000, and a wild burn in 2006. Adjacent was Merinbah, an urban forest, planted to rehabilitate a contaminated site from a previous battery factory. Unless you knew otherwise, you would have assumed it to be natural vegetation, so it was a success. Next stop was over the border into Beaumaris, to lunch and Donald McDonald Reserve. This reserve was named after a noted naturalist and journalist for *The Argus*, who died in 1932. The reserve was purchased in 1917, and once again managed with ecological burning. This was the first site with *Cherry Ballart* growing, as well as *Manna Gum* and other mature trees. *Rice flowers*- *Pimelea humilis* were everywhere.

Around the corner was Gramatan Reserve, which is only open on Sunday afternoons, but we could see the flowers from the adjacent walkway. We added *Platylobium obtusangulum*, and a red flowered form of *Correa reflexa* to our list there.

Around another corner was Long Hollow Heathland Reserve. This is a broad swampy gully, with a boardwalk, though it was dry during our visit. We heard pobblebonks and striped marsh frogs calling. A pied currawong followed us, and there were the ubiquitous red wattle birds and noisy miners. Trees included *Acacia mearnsii*, *Cherry ballart*, and *Eucalypts*. *Dillwynia* sp, *milkmaids*, and blue stars- *Chamaescilla corymbosa* added to the list. One corner of this reserve is the Winifred

Waddell Wildflower Sanctuary, named after a pioneering conservationist, who started a Wildflower Preservation Group as a part of the FNCV, and which in 1952 became the Native Plants Preservation Society. Winifred wrote articles in newspapers, campaigned, and succeeded in having 70 reserves fenced off to protect wildflowers.

The condition and numbers of these reserves is a tribute to the groups, such as the Beaumaris Conservation Society, and individuals, who have worked over the last 100 years to retain and maintain bushland. Kudos too to the former Sandringham City Council, and now Bayside City Council, for purchasing and valuing the bushland.

Our last stop on the way home was to Epsom Park Wetlands Reserve, off White St Mordialloc. This was the site of the former Epsom Racetrack and horse training facility, established in 1886, and closed in 1998. There is a 4 hectare grassland reserve in the middle of a housing development, somewhat reminiscent of Waterways at Braeside. There had been a boardwalk across the middle, but this has been removed, as it was collapsing. Kingston Council are planning on replacing it in the future. There were plenty of information boards about the vegetation there, such as *Purple blown grass*- *Lachnagrostis punicea* and *Smooth Rice-flower*- *Pimelea glauca*, which we saw, a low growing shrub. We heard pobblebonks and striped marsh frogs again. There were silver gulls on the pond, and crested pigeons and welcome swallows.

Bird list for Sandbelt- noisy miner, Red wattlebird, brown thornbill, rainbow lorikeet, eastern rosella, magpie, magpie lark, pied currawong, grey butcherbird, white browed scrub wren and welcome swallow.



Photo: Velimir Dragic
Donald McDonald memorial

Graeme Rigg—A Trip to Rajasthan, India

Graeme and his wife travelled through Rajasthan in September 2019, as part of a small group tour by bus.

Rajasthan is in the North West corner of India, bordering Pakistan, and is 10% of India's area, so it is a large state. The Aravalli Ranges, an ancient folded mountain range, divide Rajasthan. To the west is dry, with the Thar Desert, and to the east, lush farmland and forest.

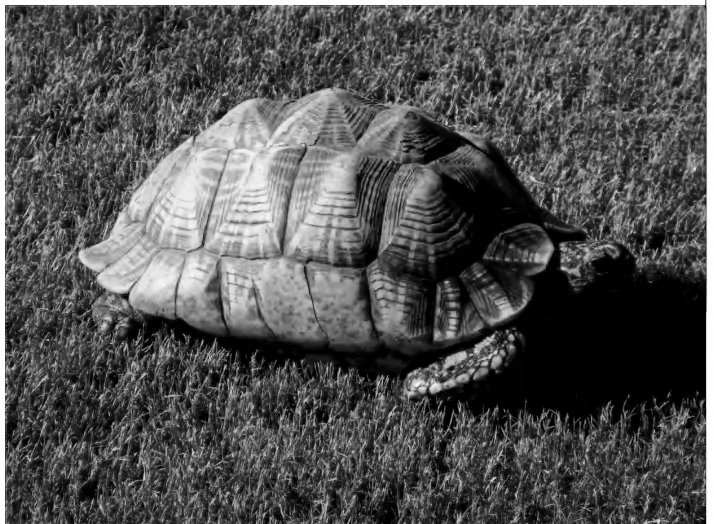
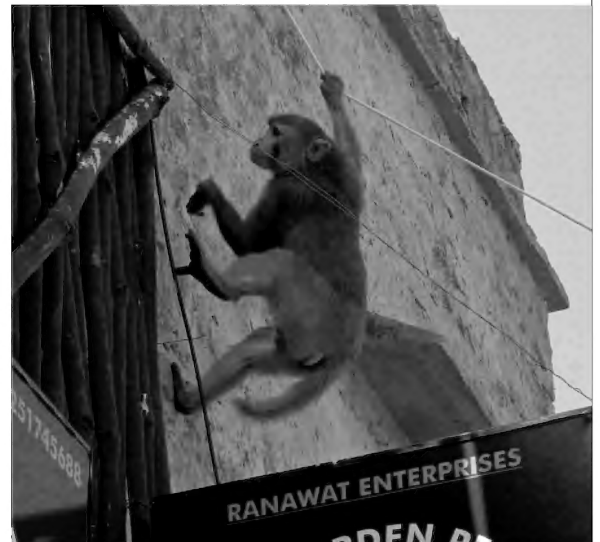
They flew into Delhi, then by bus from there to their first stop, Mandawa in Shekhawati, to stay at a haveli- a former landowners' mansion. Their tour took in Jaisalmer, (the Golden City), Jodhpur, Udaipur, Pushkar, Jaipur, with its palace in the middle of a lake, and Agra. Along the way they visited a camel farm (camels provide milk and camel leather), wildlife sanctuaries at Jodhpur and Keoladeo, and the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal was seen through a fog of air pollution.

Graeme uploaded to inaturalist 68 species of birds, insects, plants and animals. Highlights were black-buck deer, Northern Plains Grey Langur monkeys, Rhesus Macaque, the Naked Rumped Tomb Bat (quite a name), an Indian Star tortoise, and among many birds, the spectacular Indian Roller.

Graeme is planning his next trip to India- visiting there can become addictive. I know, as I am off there again in October myself.

Graeme spoke at our meeting 11/10/2023

Text: Judy Smart



Photos: Graeme Rigg
Clockwise: Painted Storks, Rhesus Macaque,
Indian Star Tortoise, Spotted Owlet

The Gurdies 14/10/23

This Nature Conservation Reserve protects one of the largest remaining areas of native vegetation on the eastern side of Western Port. It covers an area of about 260 hectares, to the north of Grantville. Our preferred access point is from Dunbabbins Rd. which ascends the Heath Hill Fault, one of the major faults

that defines the eastern side of Western Port. From this elevated position there's a good view of the coast of

Western Port Sunkland and French Island.

Conditions were cool and windy with occasional showers, the canopy of tall Narrow-leaf Peppermint Gum and

Messmate provided some shelter but birds and spring wildflowers were subdued. Our previous visit here was

in October 2018 and since that time walking tracks have changed so we were unable to access the creek and the central area. Our route took us close to the Bass Highway through Silver Banksia and acacia woodland. Well short of the 31 species on the previous visit, the modest birdlist for the day was 17 species:--

White-throated Treecreeper, Kookaburra, Golden Whistler, Yellow Robin, Eastern Rosella, Crimson Rosella, Blue-winged Parrot, Eastern Spinebill, Spotted Pardalote, Grey Shrike Thrush, Shining-bronze Cuckoo, Fantail Cuckoo, Superb Fairywren, Brown Thornbill, White-eared Honeyeater, Scarlet Robin, Grey Fantail.



On our return home, we stopped briefly at Lang Lang beach and Tooradin, but the strong cold wind and high tide did not tempt us to explore anymore of the great outdoors.

HEATHER DUCAT



Photos: J Smart
Top: *Dampiera stricta*
Right: *Caladenia iridescens*
Below: *Zieria arborescens*

Fascinating Flower Wasp Sex Lives

Late September's lovely weather lured me out to the Mornington railway where there were some great critters. I thought I'd share a bit about a small wasp that I found several mating pairs of. They are flower wasps in the Thynnidae family.

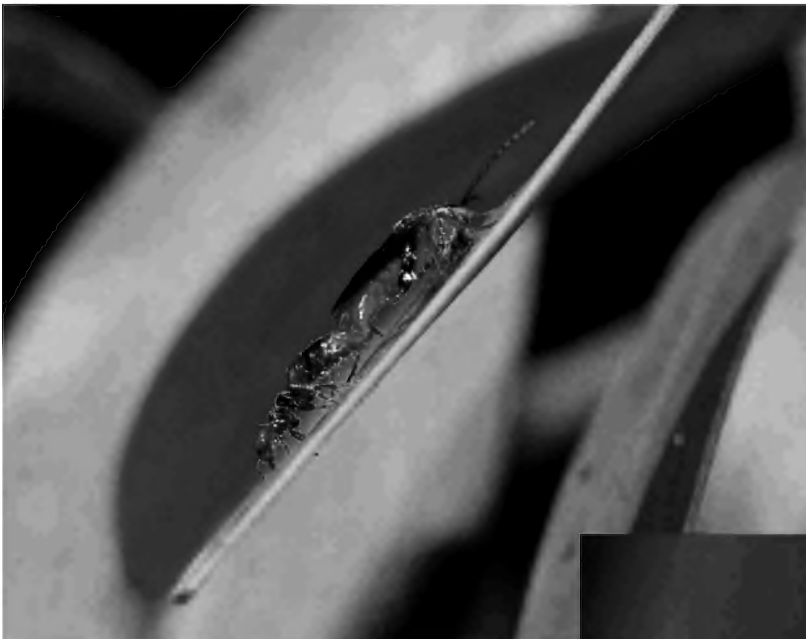
What I found when looking for an ID was this fascinating story about their sex lives.

The females are wingless and can only feed when they get taken by a male when they are coupled up ('in copulo' to be correct). So, they emerge from their pupa, which is from inside a scarab beetle that was parasitised by the parent wasp, and climb a grass stem to release their pheromone. This attracts an interested male which comes to her and they mate, a process that lasts for quite a while. He then flies off to feed on a nectar rich flower and the female can also then feed (this is the only feed she has in her life!). Then at some stage he drops her off on the ground and she seeks another scarab beetle to lay her egg on.

What adds to the intrigue of this is that if she can't attract a male of her own species, she can lure a close relative, mate and get the ride to the flower for a feed, but she clones herself rather than creating a hybrid.

What an amazing world we live in. This info was found at this site:

<https://www.taxonomyaustralia.org.au/.../thynnids-are...>



Text and Photos: Rog Standen
Male and female wasps copulating
Male and female wasps copulating –
with the female holding on in a
more typical pose

Coolart Birding Outing 6/11/2023

A small group of our members went to Coolart on an enjoyable birding outing on November 6. The list totalled close to 60 species, which, whilst giving the message that there were a wide variety of bird types there, hides the fascinating stories of what we observed, like the White-browed Scrubwren that had its two youngsters come racing to it when it held what appeared to be something like a white petal, but I suspect may have been a cabbage white butterfly, of which there were plenty about.

The numbers don't express how the young White Ibis chick seems to almost choke the parent as the long beak gets thrust down the parent's throat to suck out the sustenance held within there, or the wide range in stages of breeding by the ibis, from eggs to fledged young, nor the buzz of seeing a single Spotted Crake (our Peninsula Birdlife Friends there saw four) skulking along the water's edge among the reeds and debris, nor the joy of a dozen stunning Royal Spoonbills roosting and preening in the tree top, some in the regalia of their breeding plumage.

And why is it when nearly all the ducks have gone to freshwater bodies across the country, a couple of Wood Ducks, Pacific Black Ducks, Grey and Chestnut Teal and a single Freckled Duck (confirmed by a blurry photo later) remain behind?

This is not to say that the regulars, like the Superb Fairy-wrens did not still give our hearts a lift when we saw their brilliant colours in that glorious sunshine. Despite several failed attempts, we could not put a body to the calls of Horsefield's and Shining Bronze-cuckoos, or the Fan-tailed Cuckoo and it looked like Golden Whistler was going to join that group until over lunch, a brilliant male decided to show himself for us all to see.

It was also interesting to see Welcome Swallows preening immediately in front of the hide, giving terrific close-up views, Silvereyes taking food (the small berries most likely) from Coastal Beard Heath (*Leucopogon parvifloris*), four turtles basking on a log and so on and so on.....



Bird list in no particular order (and maybe not complete).

Grey Butcherbird	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Little Pied Cormorant	Eastern Yellow Robin
Fantailed Cuckoo	Grey Shrikethrush	Horsefield's Bronze-cuckoo	Australian White Ibis
Starling	Magpie	Shining Bronze-cuckoo	Royal Spoonbill
Common Myna	Magpie-lark	Silver Gull	Wood Duck
Striated Pardalote	Galah	Masked Lapwing	Pacific Black Duck
Red Wattlebird	Brown Thornbill	Swamp Harrier	Freckled Duck
Rufous Whistler	Blackbird	Spotted Dove	Dusky Moorhen
Eastern Rosella	Welcome Swallow	White-faced Heron	Australasian Grebe
Crimson Rosella	Eurasian Coot	White-necked Heron	Grey Teal
Willie Wagtail	Hoary-headed Grebe	Spotted Pardalote	Spotted Crake
Purple Swamp Hen	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Straw-necked Ibis	Pelican
Silvereye	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Golden whistler	Grey Fantail
Little Black Cormorant	Australian Reed Warbler	King Parrot	
Common Bronzewing	White-browed Scrubwren	Superb Fairy-wren	
Noisy Miner	Little Raven	Chestnut Teal	



Text & Photos: Rog Standen
 Top: Spotted Crake
 Bottom: Silvereye in the Leucopogon

Birds of a Feather: Housing is in Short Supply Across the Peninsula, by Kaye Williams

Hiking up from Mt Martha Beach along Balcombe Estuary to the Briars. It was easy to see what a premium nesting area this is.

You are greeted by a chirpy chorus from the LBBs (little brown birds) flying swiftly overhead. These are current residents, off for a bit of a snack further downstream.

Quality safe nesting sites, have been at a premium this year, due to the impact of fire, flood, wild winds and storms. There is habitat loss across Australia from Climate change impacts, and a prolonged El Nino.

Loss of habitat for the birds is evident by a wide canopy mature tree blown over, but not yet covered with the scrub, bushes and grasses needed for housing and nests.

The burst of warmer wetter weather has brought out plenty of insects, grass seeds and an abundance of good food and water. The small birds are loving it.

Fairy Wrens, Fantails, tiny Thornbills, a beautiful New Holland Honeyeater, swooped past me, perhaps on a focused search for a suitable nesting site.

Little brown birds, Scrub wrens, were popping out of the grassy scrub around the Briars walkway, to see if their new home site was secure enough.

Fan Tails perched, chattering colourfully about desirability of the location. They strutted their stuff on branches, preening and "peacocking" advertising "home beautiful" bush sites, (no mortgage required).

The sheltered Boardwalk, was busier than "Open House" Saturday - on the Mornington Real Estate trail.



After testing each nearby Teatree, a tiny Spotted Pardalote, finally located a perfect forked branch. The location was near the slow stream with water views, shelter and an abundant food supply.

But, LOCATION, Location? The branch was in full view, overhanging the Boardwalk!

The Spotted Pardalote had chosen a lovely open plan view. But the downside? It was at human eye level.

I quietly raised my camera and long lens...

Throwing down a few twigs across the fork then eying the shape of a proposed nest, the tiny Spotted Pardalote suddenly stopped work. It cocked its head. Looked up, and around. It seemed to be dealing with a dilemma.

Perhaps it was checking: would the nest be too small? Would junior hatch and fall out?...or some other possible OHS issue? The Spotted Pardalote checked the parameters of its nest once again.

Then it gave me a long direct, thoughtful look. Right into my long lens!

The fork perfect. üThe gentle running stream nearby perfectü Food supply spot onü

Privacy x

"Tourists" were peering in! Worse these "Walkers" will start lining up to take "selfies" with the nesting family..

Junior and the nest site could be exposed, posted on Instagram, or worse : TikTok! Nope.

Birds of a Feather continued

Keeping one eye focused on me, the Spotted Pardalote moved its twigs apart. It collected one.

And then it set off with this, in its beak.

It flew briskly into the already crowded scrub. There it began anxiously looking once again, for its perfect nesting site. One with the added essential "no peek" foliage screenings.

Need a "premade" nesting box, in the "tiny house" style?

Looking for a beautiful leafy Bayside spot with sea views, and all the insects you can eat?

Keeping one eye focused on me, the Spotted Pardalote moved its twigs apart. It collected one.

And then it set off with this, in its beak.

It flew briskly into the already crowded scrub. There it began anxiously looking once again, for its perfect nesting site. One with the added essential "no peek" foliage screenings.

Need a "premade" nesting box, in the "tiny house" style?

Looking for a beautiful leafy Bayside spot with sea views, and all the insects you can eat?

Join the queue!

Housing pressure is on, across the Peninsula and across all species.

Kaye Williams

Marine & Environmental Data Collector

Editor's note:

Kaye Williams is a local Citizen Scientist who is currently working on reducing Bag Limits for Shellfish collection, which are unrealistically high, leading to rockpool depletion. She has convinced Mornington Peninsula Shire to put up signage, and is working on Parks Victoria.

What you can do to support Australian wildlife and our native Birds in the Summer months:

Volunteer in habitat protection and restoration:

Native vegetation is important breeding and feeding habitat for birds.

Replanting and restoring native trees and shrubs is one of the best ways you can help bird populations recover.

Urbanisation is one of the most dramatic and rapidly expanding forms of man-made change to our landscapes.

Urban spaces introduce predators, exotic plants and competitors to the native wildlife and change animal behaviour. This can spell disaster for native birds. <https://birdlife.org.au/programs/birddata/>

Develop and bird friendly garden, check out :A Slackers guide to climate friendly gardening:

see link <https://theconversation.com/a-slackers-guide-to-climate-friendly-gardening-206156>

Langwarrin FFR Birding 4/12/2023

The weather prediction was for 30o, but fortunately it took a while to warm up. Five of us turned up, but the birds laid low. We saw a total of 27, with the highlight being a satin flycatcher sitting on its nest. The absences were striking- no cuckoos heard or seen, no New Holland honeyeaters (perhaps they are all living it up at Cranbourne Botanic Gardens); it was one of those quiet days.

The orchids were just starting- a few horned orchids were in flower, the tongue orchids still in bud. Plenty of onion orchids of course. The Wild Parsnips (*Trachymene australis*) were spectacular, tall and in great numbers. PV have put up the usual 'Please do not remove' posters re the *Trachymene*, as well-meaning people pull some out, mistaking them for weeds. Fortunately there are so many that numbers are not impacted.

Text & Photo: Judy Smart
Horned Orchid (*Orthoceras strictum*)



SEANA Spring Camp, October 20-23-Yarram

Hosted jointly by Sale & District FNC & the Latrobe Valley FNC, we were based at Yarram in South Gippsland. Velimir & I arrived in mid afternoon on Friday, pausing for lunch at Agnes Falls, at 59m, it is the highest single span waterfall in Victoria.

Registration and a welcome cuppa with familiar faces preceeded the usual bunfight around the sign-in sheets for the numerous and interesting excursions. Locations included Tarra-Bulga N.P. - a wonderful area of Cool Temperate Rainforest, Wilsons Prom. Whale Cruise, Shorebirds boat trip, beach and foreshore walks for saltmarsh and mangroves, plus 4 flora & fauna reserves and Wilsons Prom. walks: a bewildering choice. Our Friday night speaker - David Akers, President of Friends of Tarra-Bulga N.P. detailed the history, flora and fauna of the park. I had chosen this location for my Sat. full day excursion, as I was keen to see the unusual Beech Orange Fungus because I had seen a related species of fungus that grows on other Nothofagus species in Tierra del Fuego in South America, (refer to Velimir's report).

On Saturday evening Mitch Smith, President of Sale & District FNC entertained us with a presentation titled 'Sex, Lies & Photographs' - about orchid pollination research in the Yarram area; fabulous photos and very informative. Certainly had our attention with a title like that!

For Sunday evening Jenny Wolswinkel spoke about her book on Eucalypts of the region and local projects.

Saturday was mid and sunny, delightful to be out and about, but difficult wind conditions caused the cancellation of the Wilsons Prom. Whale Cruise. Overnight the weather turned REALLY nasty, with very strong wind and heavy rain, which required more cancellations. Phil Rayment and his team did an amazing job rearranging excursions for the day.

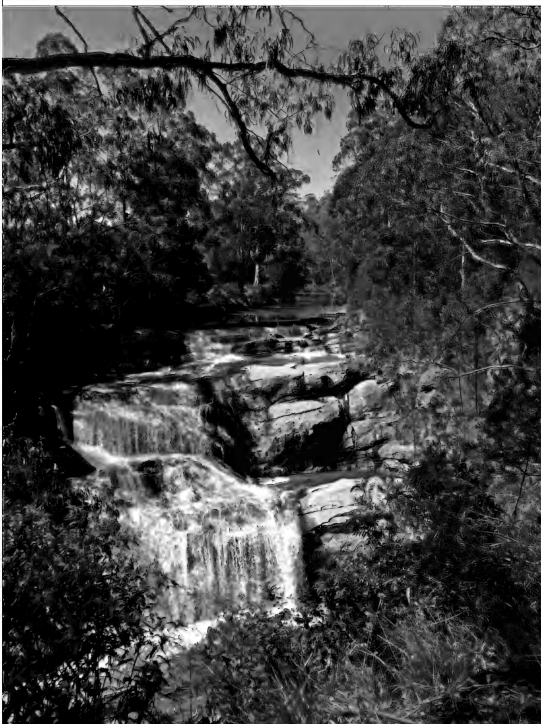
Velimir & I braved the rain for our Sunday full day excursion to the northern areas of The Prom. The downpour had eased to light rain by the time our 2 groups set off:- one to Millers Landing with mangroves and mudflats, the other to Vereker Lookout for spectacular views to Corner Inlet & Darby Saddle. (fingers crossed)

I joined the Vereker group on the steady climb through the Saw Banksia woodland. Birds were scarce, but the bush comes alive in the rain. Splashes of colour in the understorey included Milkmaids, Horny Conebush, Tall & Short Purple Flaglilies, Short Riceflower, Mauve Sun Orchid, White Fingers Orchid, small Spider Orchid & Tetratheca Pink Bells. We heard a few honey-eaters, White-eared, White-naped, New Holland, plus Yellow Robin & Grey Shrike Thrush, but most birds were well hidden, out of the rain. Exceptions were a beautiful male Flame Robin and a very wet and bedraggled Emu. We sheltered for lunch in a grove of sheoak and I wondered why I was huffing and puffing up to the lookout when I probably wouldn't be able to see anything. Fortunately the low cloud parted just long enough for a glimpse of Corner Inlet to the east and Shallow Inlet to the north-west. I always find SEANA camps interesting and good fun, despite the weather.

Velimir and I took a few detours on the way home, especially to see the fascinating geology of Walkerville and Cape Liptrap with a lunch stop at Inverloch, followed by more geology:- dinosaur and giant clubmoss fossils in the mudstone shore-platform near Inverloch. The icing on the cake of a great weekend.

Text & Photos: Heather Ducat

Left: Agnes Falls, R: Vereker Track- view to Corner Inlet



SEANA Spring Camp Yarram continued

21/10/23 Tarra-Bulga and Tarra Valley Tara-Bulga National Park is north of Yarram in eastern part of the **Strzelecki Ranges**. It is one pocket of the last remnants of the native eucalypt temperate rainforest that once covered the Strzelecki Ranges. It is still undisturbed Mountain ash forest; fern gully communities and native Myrtle Beach ***Nothofagus cunninghamii***. So many different species of ferns, mosses, liverworts and strange fungi could be seen and photographed in Fern Gully and Tarra Valley. Also we spotted and photographed Superb Lyrebird.

Tree-ferns They are tree-like ferns that grow with a trunk elevating the fronds above ground level, making them trees. Many extant tree ferns are members of the order Cyatheaales, to which belong the families Cyatheaceae (scaly tree ferns) and Dicksoniaceae. They originated in the early Jurassic together with extinct Osmunda.

All 4 species of Tarra-Bulga fern trees are seen and photographed on our Fern Gully walk



Clockwise from top left: Skirted Tree-Fern (*Cyathea marcescens*), Slender Tree-Fern (*Cyathea cunninghamii*)
Soft Tree-Fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*), Rough Tree-Fern (*Cyathea australis*)
All (0) Cyatheales

Nothofagus

Nothofagus, also known as the **southern beeches**, is a genus native to the Southern Hemisphere in southern South America (Chile, Argentina) and east and southeast Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea, and New Caledonia. The leaves are toothed or entire, evergreen. The fruit is a small, flattened or triangular nut, borne in cupules containing one to seven nuts.

Nothofagus first appeared in Antarctica during the Late Cretaceous. The genus has a rich fossil record with fossils extending into the late Cretaceous period and occurring in Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica, and South America .



One Gondwana time *Nothofagus* & dead one covered with moss and fungus Foliage: evergreen toothed leaves

Cyttaria gunnii, commonly known as the **myrtle orange** or **beech orange**, is an orange-white coloured and edible ascomycete fungus native to Australia and New Zealand. It is a specific parasite of myrtle beech trees.



Text & Photos by Velimir Dragic

RJ Chambers Reserve, Pakenham Upper, 11/11/2023

This reserve, managed by Cardinia Shire, comprises a little over 120 hectares of mostly open woodland. It is quite undulating, with some steep trails. The higher slopes mostly have a tree cover of Messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) and Narrow-leaved Peppermint (*E. radiata*), with Brown Stringybark (*E. baxteri*) also present. The reserve is cut by a number of small creeks; on the lower slopes are tall Mountain Grey Gum (*E. cypellocarpa*). Understory is fairly sparse, mostly Forest Wire-grass (*Tetrarrhena juncea*), but with a number of interesting plants in flower including Yellow Rice-flower (*Pimelea flava*), Mountain Grevillea (*G. alpina*), Dusty Miller (*Spyridium parvifolium*) and Common Cassinia (*Cassinia aculeata*). Two species of Hakea, Bushy Needlewood (*Hakea decurrens*) and Furze Hakea (*Hakea ulicina*) were seen—an interesting contrast can be seen on the Acacia Walk: below the track a sign tells us that a burn was carried out early this year, while the trail notes say that above the track was burnt in 2003. The lower side has no understory besides the Wire-grass, while Furze Hakea is growing thickly on the upper side burnt 20 years ago.

At the lowest point in the reserve, in the creek valley, there is more vegetation, with the tall Mountain Grey Gum and some Swamp Gum (*E. ovata*) standing over an understory including the fern *Blechnum nudum*; some tall Rough Tree-ferns (*Cyathea australis*) stood out in the valley, together with Blackwoods (*Acacia melanoxylon*) and reeds and rushes. On the lower slope we noted Holly Lomatia (*L. ilicifolia*).

We saw abundant sign of wombats, but of course none were in evidence. The nature of the forest made bird-spotting rather difficult, since there was no low understory to speak of, so we heard more birds somewhere up in the canopy than we saw—including a Lyrebird, Fan-tailed Cuckoo and Olive-backed Oriole, which are elusive at the best of times. Eventually the bird count reached 23, including Golden and Rufous Whistler, Eastern and Crimson Rosella, White-throated Treecreeper, and good views of Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo and Pied Currawong.

Plants noted in flower:

Pimelea flava – Yellow Rice-flower
Grevillea alpina – Mountain Grevillea
Spyridium parvifolium – Dusty Miller
Dianella revoluta – Black-anther Flax-lily
Thysanotus tuberosus – Common Fringe-lily
Stylidium graminifolium – Grass-leaved Triggerplant
Acacia verticillata – Prickly Moses
Bauera rubioides – Wiry Bauera
Tetratheca ciliata – Pink Bells
Coronidium scorpioides – Button Everlasting
Goodenia ovata – Hop Goodenia
Goodenia geniculata – Bent Goodenia
Hypoxis vaginata – Yellow Stars
Burchardia umbellata – Milkmaids
Chiloglottis valida – Common Bird Orchid
Leptospermum continentale – Prickly Tea-tree
Ozothamnus ferrugineus *Cassinia aculeata*
Xanthorrhoea minor *Pultenea hispidula*
Craspedia sp? *Clematis aristata*
Wahlenbergia sp.
Persicaria lapathifolia – Pale Knotweed



Text and Photos: Lee Denis

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo

Grevillea alpina

Thysanotus tuberosus

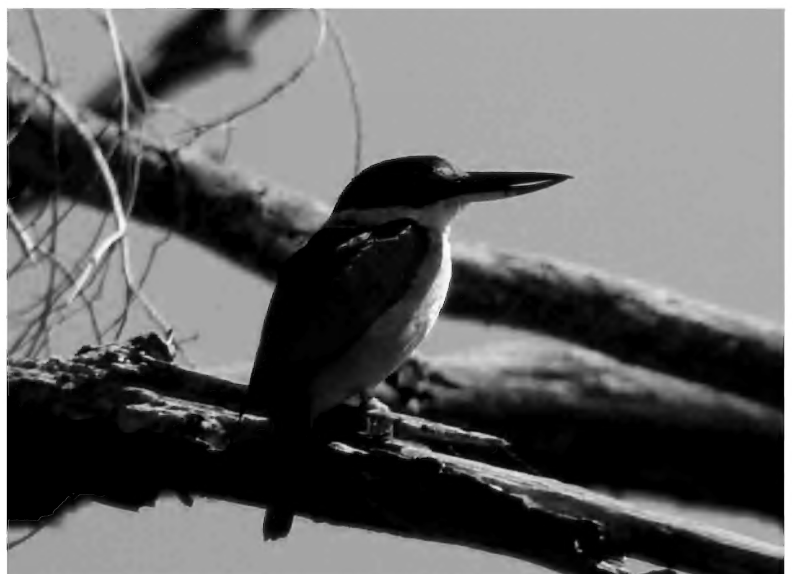


Birding at Woods Reserve, 2/10/2023

We had a good turnout for this excursion. The day was ideal, fine and mild with little wind as we started up the track from the Balnarring Road. At first we could hear a lot of different birds, but seeing them became a bit of a challenge. After some debate and playing of apps the consensus was that the unfamiliar sound from somewhere in the old scout camp was a Brush Bronzewing. In the same area was the familiar sound of Bell Miners, likewise difficult to see. As we moved on we could hear Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Shining Bronze-cuckoo, Olive-backed Oriole, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Sacred Kingfisher—eventually we saw most of these, although the Shining Bronze-cuckoo and Brush Bronzewing remained elusive. Honeyeaters were in abundance, with Red and Little Wattlebirds, Yellow-faced, White-eared and White-naped, and Eastern Spinebill. A raptor overhead caused more debate, with final agreement being Brown Goshawk.

For once there were birds on the dam—Grey Teal, Wood Duck and Little Pied Cormorant. Most of the usual bush birds were noted, including Spotted and Striated Pardalote, Grey Currawong, Superb Fairy-wren, Brown Thornbill, White-browed Scrubwren and both Crimson and Eastern Rosellas. We were delighted to see a little party of Varied Sitellas. High on the far horizon someone spotted a Wedge-tailed Eagle perched on a treetop—it was still there more than an hour later.

After lunch another short ramble brought a sighting of Bell Miners; the addition of Red-browed Finches brought our count to 54.



Text & photos: Lee Denis

Black-faced Cuckoo-Shrike on nest
Sacred Kingfisher

Leon Costermans

Leon Costermans has been a long-standing friend of our Club, delivering many interesting natural history talks, mostly on botany and geology, as well as leading excursions—and we are just one of innumerable groups he has been involved with. We often see park notes put together by Friends groups, with an acknowledgement of Leon's assistance. In between he has published a number of books, including his well-known *Native Trees and Shrubs of South-eastern Australia*, and *Trees of Victoria and Adjoining areas*, and most recently, in collaboration with Fons VandenBerg, a survey of the geology of south-eastern Australia, *Stories Beneath Our Feet*.

One of the many groups Leon has been closely involved with is the Friends of Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve. This former army reserve was made a nature reserve in the 1970s, after a collaboration between local landholders and conservation activists, including Leon and several members of our Club. The Friends group was formed early on, and for the last 35 years Leon has led this group in removing woody weeds, doing some planting, and liaising with Parks Victoria in management. Many members of our Club have been and still are members of these Friends. Now Leon has decided to step down from his official convenor role for the group, although he will remain with the group and will always provide leadership and advice.

With his background in teaching, Leon has always been intent on making us think, rather than just lecturing us. We look forward to continuing to benefit from his knowledge and his willingness to share it.

Text: Lee Denis

Photo: LFFR Friends Xmas break up—photo taken by Leon, of course



Contact Us

Peninsula Field Naturalists Club Inc

CAV: A0010510T

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month with a field trip on the following Saturday. Visitors always welcome.

We also go birding on the first Monday of the month.

Further information and current Program of Activities can be found at our website:

www.peninsulafieldnaturalists.org.au

We are also on Face book: **Peninsula Field Nats**

Email: penfieldnats@gmail.com

Secretary & temporary editor: Judy Smart

President: vacant

Treasurer: Linda Edwards

Annual subs due July

Adult \$35

Concession \$30

Family \$40

To pay direct to bank account: Bendigo Bank

BSB 633-108

Account 123350068

Please email secretary when paid

And Also.....

Upcoming SEANA Camps

The SEANA AGM on Saturday afternoon confirmed up-coming camps:-

2024 AUTUMN - Phillip Island, hosted by Field Nats. Club of Victoria.

2024 SPRING - Marysville, hosted by Ringwood FNC

2025 AUTUMN - as yet, No Location & No host.

2025 SPRING - Ballarat, hosted by Ballarat FNC

Photos that I Didn't Manage to Fit with Their Articles



Langwarrin FFR 4/12/2023
Photos: Lee Denis
Heather among the *Trachymene australis*
Satin Flycatcher on nest



Leon Costermans
Photo: J Smart



Lake Eyre- Brown Magpie
Photo: Heather Ducat

BHL



Blank Page Digitally Inserted